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ABSTRACT

Following an analysis of the literature on the operation of institutions within society and of the school as an institution, this exploratory study examined Brazilian students' perceptions of school and life in light of school's structural aspects, such as bureaucratic organization and social/political functions. The orientations of Pierre Erny, Bruno Duborgel, and Max Pages were used as a theoretical/methodological basis in exploring how schools are organized according to first- and fourth-grade students, their teachers, and school headmasters. Discourse analysis of student drawings on "Me and School" and "So Is Life" was completed using themes of: to like or not like school, financial difficulties, life conditions, violence, home, illnesses, death, poverty, alcoholism, drugs, hunger, prejudice, concern, and politics. Teachers and headmasters were also interviewed. These data were supplemented with demographic data about the school. The drawings indicated that school is a space of sociality for children, with a weak relationship between children and the school sometimes indicated (through a lack of depiction of the school building or teacher, for example). Children were distressed over many aspects of their lives, such as illness, violence, and lack of money. The study also found strong indications that teachers and headmasters ignore the life lived in each school. The study concludes that when schools do not perceive the whole complexity within their walls and outside them, they become organizations devoted to perpetuating themselves rather than furthering their original goals. (Contains 19 references in Portuguese.) (EV)

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ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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ORGANIZATION OF WORK IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1 - Starting Point:

School is considered as the most favorable environment for systematized education. The one which implies teacher-student relationship, presence of technostructure, which has a political orientation and suffers the influences of economic, social, legal and ecological nature with a culture of itself.

The environment is thus understood as means, as a space for actions, relations as from two points: functionalistic and critical. The first one is related to principles of efficiency, effectiveness and productivity, centered in planning, organization, direction and controlling of action. It is the technical reason as Weber applies it (Apud MARCUSE, 1970): "*to improve raw material (things and men) organizing and controlling the plant, bureaucracy, works and leisures*". The second one is the denunciatory speech trying to alert as to ideology which goes through school work and the need to rethink its practice as former of conscientious citizens capable of changing society.

According to Teixeira (1987) there are invariances between these two approaches insofar as both are grounded in the same paradigm by not questioning the school's bureaucratic structure, power and domination. To the author, the State continues to be the protector and school is submissive at the same time that one preserves hegemony of the ruling class (liberal) and the other favors the establishment and preservation of a new domination made by a new social class and justified by the search of a fairer (more critical) society.

Critical approach tries to offer mechanisms of action in an attempt to make education environment more democratic, struggling for a participation management but it collides with formal rationality *"an instrument of power of the first degree...for those who hold the bureaucratic apparatus"*, Weber (Apud MARCUSE, 1970).

The Weberian idea seems to substantiate Motta's concern in relation to participation when alerting that managing is planning, organizing, coordinating, commanding and controlling and to be managed means to undergo this whole process. The author also reminds that a minority manages while a majority is managed, therefore to manage is to exercise a delegated power being a relationship of command and domination. To him, only self management which means self administration allows the person, group or institution to have the power.

Motta's ideas are similar to Teixeira's (1987) insofar as although the idea of participation arises from critical thought it excludes any alteration in power structure.

School thus lives in an imposed environment organized outside of its walls which does not take into account its reality, with a bureaucratic schedule which jams any change process at the same time it does not manage to do its job: to educate man.

It is observed that school managed under the organization viewpoint has been losing its very work dynamics in the sense that Bleger (1991) refers to when considering that in organization the aims by which they were created are in the background and perpetuation of organization where means are changed into ends are placed in the foreground with a tendency to maintain the same structure of the problem it tries to face and by which it was created.

With respect to school the concern with the so-called "mean activities"(school meal, documents, cleaning, building keeping) leaves educational process in the background. School is more concerned with bureaucracy and supporting mechanisms than educating from the moment it favors recurrence, evasion or abandonment.

It also becomes a place for isolation, aggressions, teacher-student distancing, generating a separation between what it thinks of doing and what it in fact does.

Authors like Enriquez (1991), Lapassade (1997) may help understanding the issue when they question the idea of group, organizations and institutions.

For Enriquez (1991) institutions are places where if not a perfect consensus prevails, at least a sufficient agreement does, in order to carry on a collective work, different from organizations which aim at a delimited, ciphered and dated production of a good or service.

Thus, for the author, institutions play an essential role in social regulation insofar as it can help in the renewal or maintenance of a given community as from alterity, acceptance of the other, fraternity and cooperation.

In the union Enriquez - Bleger (1991), it is possible to notice that institution is grouped to the set of norms, rules, activities filled with values and social functions while organization is related to hierarchical setting of functions in a defined group tending to marginalize institution.

Lapassade (1991) in the search to define groups, organizations and Institutions places these ones as three levels of social reality in an interdependence process.

In the foreground he places the groups as everyday life base level which allows the process of analysis and intervention. He also alerts that at this level institution already exists, once norms, control system, rules, roles are established.

Group analysis implies the very analysis of the social field in its entirety and which is only true when it is grounded in institution analysis. Lapassade (1977:15) says: "*every institutional system already exists, among us (...) in the material setting of the places and work instruments, timetables, programs, authority systems*"

Lapassade (1977) places organization in the background. It is the level in which system appears in its entirety. It is the group of groups which rules itself by norms, which

mediates base and State and that as second institutional level shows legal forms, apparatuses, connections, transmission of orders. In short, it is the bureaucratic organization level.

The third level is institution as Durkheim (Apud ERNY, 1982) considers it, that is, everything which is "established", "instituted". It is the State's level which grants institutions forces of law.

Lapassade tries to exemplify the issue using school as reference. To him pedagogical practice is established in three levels: the first one is the basic pedagogical unit. It is the class, teaching practice level; the second one is the establishment level, sometimes called "institution" and the third one is the State's which defines general rules.

The first and second groups are present in the last one. In the second through "orientation law", in the first through control of teachers over acquisition of knowledge and insofar as they grant certificates or diplomas, are representatives of the State's authority.

Institution is not considered by this author as a superstructure. He affirms that what is found in a system's superstructure is only the institution's institutionalized aspect. It is the law, code, written rule and that there are non visible things, instituted, which are also part of the institution and that institution is therefore the meeting point of these levels.

Thus, institution represents a considerable comprehension from the moment it involves State, groups and persons and with them rules, ideologies, rites, myths and values, that is, what is instituted and what is instituting, the patent and latent.

On the other hand Castoriadis (1991) does not question the functionalistic view of institution insofar as they (institutions) fulfill vital functions without which the existence of a society is inconceivable. What the author advocates is that institutions cannot be limited to this aspect and that it is necessary to know the real needs of a society to which institutions are intended to serve, advocating as starting point the way of being under

which institution is constituted - the symbolic. He alerts that institutions cannot be reduced to symbolic but that they can only exist in the symbolic and constitute a symbolic network. To him (1991:142) "an organization, economy, law system, an instituted power exists as sanctioned symbolic systems

Enriquez (1991) complements this idea when defining institution as a social global regulation element which is represented as cultural, symbolic and imaginary settings. As cultural system, it involves values, rules, thought and action which structure the way of living in institution. As to symbolic systems, rites, myths, heroes, sagas sediment action of group members giving meaning to life.

From this viewpoint imaginary system acts as the trap made by institution to protect itself against the possibility of unsteadiness of its identity, fears, fragmentation distress, providing the strong armor of statute and institution's solid identity, responding to the pleas.

As from this theoretical approach as backdrop a study of an exploratory nature was made with a view to understanding structural aspects such as bureaucratic organization - social/political functions and perception that students have of school and life, so as to offer hints in order to think over the school work organization.

2 – Methodology

To carry out the exploratory study of a comprehensive approach the orientations provided by Pierre Erny (1982), Bruno Duborgel (1992) and Max Pagés (1990) were used as theoretical/methodological basis so as to understand how schools are organized as from what 1st and 4th series' students, their teachers and heads think and feel.

To map what Erny calls **Environment**, to apprehend the totality of external conditions in which the individual lives and develops, in a first moment description of each school was

made by means of: location, creation, access, sanitation, population, social/economic status, manpower, health service, leisure, churches, security, residents' association, where each school is located and in a second moment, characterization of the schools as from creation, number of students, teachers' formation, technical/administrative staff and physical space.

It was considered important to add to the study of **Environment** the way of thinking, feeling and acting of students, those who stick to the order of culture. For this purpose the use of non verbal techniques as directed drawing and stories to be completed were essential in an attempt to embrace cultural reality.

Sampling by draw technique was used to apply directed drawing technique: "Me and the School" - a story to be completed: "So is life...", respectively, in a 1st series class and another one of the 4th series' in each school. Drawings were analyzed according to Bruno Duborgel's (1992)orientations and stories according to Pagés'(1990) discourse analysis methodology.

For Duborgel (1992) drawing is an evidence of elementary participation of the child in a word of restricted images but of a symbolic reach and of a certain symbolic coherence liking between themselves images which allow apprehension of a natural harmony: a more or less mythical representation of a way of being in the world in relation to him/herself, others and nature, expressed in images of maternal tonality and rest. Still an evidence of power: representation which immobilizes fantastic powers, of real powers, of richness, the champion, the hero. It is, in short, a way for the child to reproduce the reality that surrounds him/her.

As to the story to be completed the aim was to apprehend through written discourse the kind of life lived by students, their fears, values, afflictions and perspectives. For this purpose, Pagés' orientations (1990) were taken, who considers necessary to break off in a significant way the primacy of the economic and search a way of action which does not

separate economic, political, ideological and psychological aspects. According to the author the use of a work methodology which facilitates symbolic expression becomes necessary, capable of considering the discourse not as a set of parts which has a content which can be isolated but as a flow of contradictions linked and chained, distant from statistic methods of treatment.

As discourse analysis unit, that is, as fragment for treatment of data as from the theme of life, the following units were used: to like or not like school, financial difficulties, life conditions, violence, home, illnesses, death, poverty, alcoholism, drugs, hunger, prejudice, concern, politics, seeking to embrace the ideological, political, cultural, biological and social, trying to observe the student from a bio/psycho/social/cultural perspective, what Morin (1969) defines as peninsular view of man and Geertz (1989) advocates as a non stratigraphic perspective of man. A man who lives under a web of meanings build by himself - culture.

Thus, it was possible to check how schools are organized, structuring forms, the established and the way some students of the referenced schools think and feel. Teachers of researched groups, as well as the head of each school were also heard to cross information and get a closer portrait of the reality studied.

Thirteen schools of a municipality in baixada fluminense (fluminense lowlands) which accepted to take part and cooperate in the work were researched.

3 - PORTRAIT OF THE MUNICIPALITY

The municipality has a population of about 240 thousand inhabitants distributed in 70 districts with an area of 72, 96 Km^2, located in baixada fluminense (fluminense lowlands)

It is a municipality with "rurbane" characteristics as Freire defines it. It has large rural areas with a significant agriculture. The culture of cassava, okra, corn, passion fruit and banana lives together with an industrial estate which includes large and medium-sized national and multinational companies.

Access to the municipality is provided by bus. Seven bus lines make the route, municipal and intermunicipal, which are not enough yet for customers' transport. Basic sanitation is precarious, water is not treated and frequently lacks. It has two sport clubs many Protestant churches and a Roman Catholic Church. In many districts there are residents' associations linked to the Associations' Confederation of the respective municipality.

Municipal health sector comprehends many health centers in some districts but there is no hospital. Security is under responsibility of the Military Police Battalion.

As to education, the municipality has 19 city-held schools, 7 CIEPS (Popular Education Integrated Centers - a combined school and community center), 8 state held schools, two of them offering secondary level education and 8 private ones, 6 of which also offer secondary level education.

4 – SCHOOLS

As from collected data it was observed that municipal education network has a teaching staff made up of 84 teachers with B.A.s, 3 with postgraduation courses and 179 with secondary level graduation. Most of the schools can be considered as having good physical conditions. Technical and administrative staff is incomplete, there is lack of shift coordinators, assistant director, educational advisor, pedagogical advisor, general services employees and dinner-ladies. The network has 65 classrooms in areas with urbane and rurbane characteristics serving a low income population made up of a

manpower of diarists, maids, stonemasons, painters, carpenters, tilers, assistants, commerce workers, drivers and small businessmen.

Important issues were apprehended in the study, impossible to be portrayed here in their entirety. Thus, a quick overview will be made aiming at showing the way of thinking and feeling of students, teachers and school heads.

Upon analysis of 1st series students' drawings it was possible to perceive that school is a space for sociality for the child. The presence of flowers, sun, moon, star, fruit trees lives together with images of windowless or doorless schools or still with strong bars, gates and locked doors, numbered classrooms, huge doors which cover small children or still which appear without children, teacher, replaced by huge soccer fields, with children running towards school, playing hand in hand in an interaction process. Blackboards, teachers also appear without the presence of students as if he/she could not feel as part of the process. Some drawings showed the weak relationship of the children with school when they draw themselves alone without the presence of the school, teacher, mates, even writing "they've gone away" or still, drawn in frames in a static way in front of the school door.

In each of the researched groups, teachers made statements which added little to the children's drawings although in some cases, those in which the teacher has a commitment with his/her work, it was possible to perceive that there are problems from behind so significant drawings.

There are cases in which the teacher attests that children live in bad conditions, dirty, with no hygienic habits and attitudes which are not proper to a classroom. They live abandoned or adopted by mother "TV". Their parents ignore school work, are violent, beat the children, there is no healthy familiar relationship. Children are aggressive, disinterested, recurrent, although some show improvements, taking care of their bodies, participating in the school's activities. If some teachers give opinions about their

students, others are limited to call attention to the attendance issue, good or bad behavior and whether they will be approved or not at the end of the school year. There are strong indications that teachers and heads ignore the life lived in each school. Other teachers go a bit further when the undervaluing of teaching career and overwork issue arises upon assuming the whole educational work which should be incumbent to parents and other social institutions.

Concerning the stories to be completed students showed to be distressed about their relatives' death, illnesses, violence all around (in their houses, in the balls, in the fires in nature, in the trees, in women, children, in the traffic), separation of parents connected with alcoholism, disillusion, failure in school, unemployment, lack of money for parents to educate their children, nonexistence of basic sanitation, floods, water and air pollution, lack of government support, lack of justice with drug dealers who do the job incumbent to the State, violence of "funk" balls and kidnapping.

Some believe that only Jesus Christ can help, that the only solution is God and that to protect children and the poor and homeless is an obligation of politicians and others. That lack of money is to be blamed for everything, that children must have their dreams come true: toys, clothes, bikes, houses, car, side by side with peace, happiness, without quarrels, confusion and healthy and that although they do not have all this, they still consider themselves happier than rich children who live locked in apartments.

Heads gave little contribution to the work when providing statements which could show knowledge of the public they serve. Many were limited to talk about students an teachers' attendance, children's behavior out of classrooms (aisles and playtime) in their relationship with mates. Only one affirmed that the district is violent, that children are aggressive and that lacks space for children's leisure.

5 - Arrival; temporary conclusion

Children's precarious condition is visible although the richness of their imaginary is also visible, their capacity to represent problems, showing their distress and aspirations in the richness of details of drawings and speeches. This seems to prove the idea that economic poverty does not necessarily imply a poverty of image. According to Teixeira (1990), in a general way, there is a deep ignorance of the students' cultural and symbolic universe, when reducing and trying to explain everything as from the economic aspect.

We shall think as Wittgenstein (p.245) when affirming: "my world is what my language builds; the limits of my language are the limits of my world", in order we can relate language, thought and reality. The problems they face at home, lack of money, illnesses, violence, distancing of teaching/learning process, show, on the other hand, happiness for being at school as if it were the space intended for the change of their lives, to make dreams come true.

School, thus, cannot perceive the whole complexity which is within its walls and outside them. Few times teachers' speech is compatible with students, what demonstrates the lack of knowledge of reality. Heads, as well, ignore the kind of student the school serves, being concerned with attendance and behavior.

Drawings clearly represent school neighborhood, in the sense that it guards itself against violence with gates, bars and walls. Students' speech also portray violence and school appears as something distant, with no involvement on the part of the child in its activities, as if he/she were speaking about something external to him/herself, distant, unattainable, maybe a result of a school which does not solidify interactions. It is a suffered clientele who knows what disturbs and hinders them, who lives together with

violence, then aggressiveness and lack of discipline. They do not manage to overcome the barriers that the school institution places, ,going maybe towards disinterest, aggressiveness, being respected by the very violence that they repress.

It is necessary to find a way to organize school, which takes into account the kind of life lived by its students. School cannot carry on its work as if everything were "all right, thank you". Fears, yearnings, needs, dreams, difficulties, are present and even visible when we try to look at many sides: the non established, the chance, values, myths, rites and ideologies.

School, turned to itself, ends up by repeating what Bleger (1991) calls our attention to, an organization the aims of which are in the background, seen that in the foreground is its continuity and with that the means are changed into ends, keeping the same problem structure which it tries to face and by which it was created.

School exists as a socialization space, in which the Prometheus myth is present in every child's life, as a means to make changes, attain great ideals. It seems, however, that Hermes has been preventing such dream from coming true through valuing of the school work, barred in the ropes of bureaucracy, of the papers of the "management furor", of which Carvalho (1990) talks about, without organizational alternatives which allow to think it out of the exclusive parameters of efficiency, effectiveness and productivity.

A school concerned with citizenship shall go beyond assured duties and rights. It requires a claim practice (COVRE, 1992), or still a conquered citizenship instead of a granted one (COUTINHO, 1992) as from an autonomy which implies dependence, self management, which combats waste, refusing authoritarism, struggling for alterity, reviewing forgotten issues such as values, myths, rites and ideology creating thus prerequisites for full exercise of citizenship.

Among these prerequisites is the major sense of sociality (MAFESSOLI), valuing the sensitive, communication, collective emotion, the non established, the chance, the

subjective, side by side with organizational structures which for Paula Carvalho are present in the codes, systems of action, in the instituted, in the patent culture, in the cognitive aspect, in the set of ideas and in the ideations capable of coping with the bureaucratic, pedagogical and symbolic.

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